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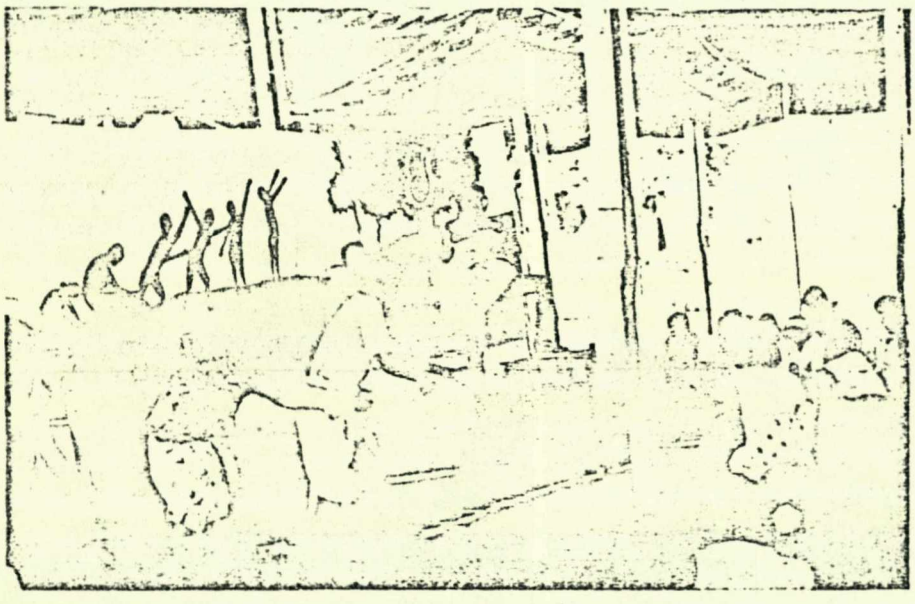
'We take up the Challenge to make God's justice and peace into reality'

– Asia Youth Assembly, 1984

THE rapid beat of a drum, dancing masked figures forming a human chain stretching into the crowded audience who have risen from the mats spread across the ground, all swaying in a rhythm of rising urgency and moving against the towering figures representing wealth, power and foreign domination. This was the scene as the closing act of the Asia Youth Assembly reached its climax. Starting with the soft notes of a Thai flute during a eucharist of sharing rice and rice water, the celebration moved to a dramatic finale when a giant mural of Asian youth in the struggle unfurled behind the actors.



Biblical Theme

The Assembly took place in Delhi, India, from October 2 to 9 under the theme THY WILL BE DONE. The sub-theme was *Organising in Solidarity With Peoples' Struggles* and this was taken by participants to be the main thrust of God's will for them.

Church youth in the majority

The participants were mostly from Asian churches – youth who are committed to relating their faith to the concrete concerns of their society. To make the Assembly truly ecumenical, Asian youth of other faiths and ideologies were also invited.

Indian realities experienced

The Assembly really began one week earlier, on September 25th, when about 250 participants and resource persons arrived at 5 different international airports in India: Calcutta Delhi, Bombay, Madras and Trivandrum. At these and other nearby places they were briefed on the Indian situation and taken in small groups on exposure programmes to witness various struggles of the people: from fisherpeople in Kerala and landless labourers in Tamil Nadu to urban poor in Bombay and peasant farmers in West Bengal. Only by meeting with the people of India face to face and sharing their situations in their own countries, it was felt the participants would be able to discuss Asian realities at a deep level.

International participation

Gathering in the spacious grounds of St Stephen's College in Delhi, the Assembly began with worship which gathered up under the theme the concerns of the many nations represented (Most Asian countries plus El Salvador, Peru, Argentina, Tuvalu, UK, USA, Canada, the Netherlands.) Organisations represented included the WCC Youth Sub-Unit, the International Movement of Catholic Students, the Asian Students' Association, the Ecumenical Youth Council of Europe, the Latin American Ecumenical Youth Council (ULAJE), the Pacific Conference of Churches and Young Christians for Global Justice (North America).

After greetings were extended by Ms Mary Kemchand on behalf of the NCC of India, Bishop Poulose Mar Poulose on behalf of WSCF-Asia/Pacific Region and Dr Yap Kim Hao for CCA, the Assembly began its life of drama and music, prayer and debate under the leadership of Ms Dianna Khoo (Singapore) and Mr Fructuoso Sabug (Philippines) who were the co-moderators.

Major ecumenical topics

Keynote addresses were delivered on Asian issues related to the Indian situation, on how to build and maintain peoples' movements and on a new ecumenical vision for Asian youth. To bring the experience of people in various struggles, witnesses from the Tamil people of Sri Lanka, from the Kanak people of New Caledonia, from the invaded country of East Timor and from the victims of pollution disease in Minamata, Japan, gave their personal testimonies of suffering and struggle.

Dramatisation of the assembly

The Assembly made full use of drama and art in its way of dealing with issues with the aid of dramatists and artists from the Philippines, Japan, India and Burma.

The reports of 13 exposure groups were presented in dramatic form in the large tent used every morning for worship. After intensive preparation these presentations proved a powerful medium for portraying Asian concerns.

Self-Criticism and Workshops

Probably uniquely for an ecumenical assembly, an open forum was held on the fourth morning for the participants to comment on the input and to criticise the process of the Assembly up to that point. The suggestions were taken up immediately and participants then concentrated on workshops in smaller

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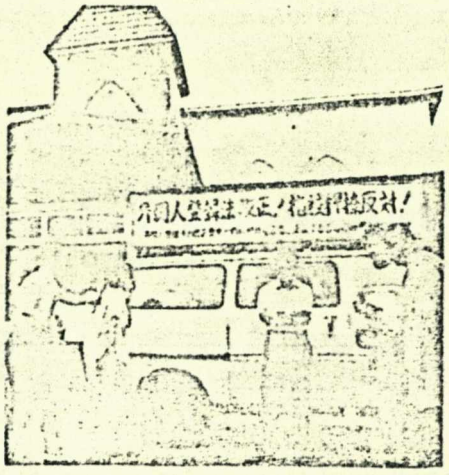
Anti-Fingerprinting Drive

A 10 day caravan of Kyodan and KCCJ youth and pastors protesting the fingerprinting of foreign residents in Japan left Tokyo on Aug. 22, travelled throughout the Kanto and Tohoku Districts to Hokkaido and returned to Tokyo on Sept. 1. Consciousness raising among Kyodan church members on the fingerprinting issue, opportunities for exchange between caravan members and local church members, the collecting of signatures against fingerprinting and the publicizing of the fingerprint protest campaign were the goals set by the caravan organizers, the Kanto Area Committee for the Movement Protesting the Alien Registration Fingerprinting System.



The Central Committee of NCC-Japan also passed a resolution in support of the ecumenical movement to revise the fingerprinting requirements for Alien Registration. The NCCJ's decision was to use the same method of signature collecting, promoting the petitions used by the Kyodan and KCCJ within the NCCJ constituency.

(JCAN)

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groups: Ideology, Theology and a New Political Vision; Womens' Issues in Asia; Peoples' Movements in the Asia-Pacific Region; Youth Participation — Self-Determination or Social Control?; Asian Youth and Student Movements-Agenda for the Future; Drama as an Organising Method. These workshops eventually reported to the whole Assembly with imaginative and substantive recommendations.

Sharing of concerns

Two highlights of the Assembly were the programme of Asian issues sharing (where participants offered to share slides, lectures tapes, videos, films on their various situations) and the "mela" or cultural festival. The mela, coming after the sharing of information and analytical perspectives, was a chance for cultural expressions of struggle and celebration which revealed unexpected vitality and talent.

Resolutions

The Assembly resolved to support struggles for self-determination and democratization, and against foreign control, in Korea, Philippines, East Timor and New Caledonia. It also stated its support for the struggle of minorities for self-determination: Tamils in Sri Lanka, Maoris in Aotearoa and Aboriginals in Australia. Among other resolutions were motions of solidarity with the Faith Movement for Peoples' Liberation in Kerala and the student struggle against militarization in Bangladesh.

New ecumenical leadership

One of the main successes of the Assembly was the identification of a new ecumenical leadership emerging among the participants. This holds great promise for the future of the Asian ecumenical movements.

Undoubtedly, this major event in the history of Asian youth and student movements will be a reference point in the decades to come because it has firmly established both the agenda and the spirit for the future.

Assembly declaration

In a final statement, the youth of Asia declared, ". . . here in Delhi we have renewed our faith, celebrated our youth and derived strength from each other's commitment. We now take up the challenge to make our vision of God's justice and peace into reality. Thy Will Be Done!"

(CCA Youth Desk)

NEWSBRIEFS

CCA Presidium

The Rev Y Moses, Youth Secretary, NCC-India has been elected as the fourth member of the CCA Presidium to serve till the next CCA assembly in July 1985. He takes the place of Ms Prasannakumari Thottathil (India) who has resigned.

Shoji resigns

AT the 9th Central Committee meeting of NCCJ held September 13, Rev SHOJI Tsutomu submitted his resignation as General Secretary, effective at the close of his term in March 1985. He explained that he has served as General Secretary since 1978 and feels, "it will be an appropriate time to leave so that other people will have the chance to experience ecumenical work." Mr Shoji is a member of the CCA General Committee.

Back to the parish

The Rev. Angus MacLeod, NCC General Secretary for the past 10½ years, has accepted an invitation to become the minister of the Long Bay Baptist Church, Auckland. He will commence at the beginning of February, 1985.

Mr. MacLeod is a member of the CCA General Committee.

Brouwer nominated for US NCC post

Arie Brouwer, deputy general secretary of the WCC, has been nominated by a 28-member search committee as the fifth general secretary of the National Council of Churches, based in New York. A vote on the nomination is scheduled for the NCC governing board meeting (7-10 November). Brouwer would succeed the retiring Claire Randall, NCC general secretary since 1 January 1974.

A long-awaited visit

A ten-person Chinese Christian delegation under the leadership of Bishop K H Ting visited Japan, beginning September 22, at the invitation of NCC-J. They received an enthusiastic and warm welcome from Japanese Christians to whom the visit was the fulfilment of a dream of many years.

LWF Programme on World religions

THE Rev. Dr. J. Paul Rajashekar, 36, of India is to direct the Lutheran World Federation's (LWF) department of studies programmes on world religions. As the secretary for church and people of other faiths and ideologies, his study work will include most of the world religions, Christian-Marxist dialogue and the so-called "new religions."

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ASIA YOUTH ASSEMBLY

Delhi, September 25 – October 10, 1984
CCA YOUTH in association with WSCF-ASIA/PACIFIC REGION

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To: AYA Resource Persons, Planning Committee,
Local Arrangements Committee

Dear friends

I trust you are all fully recovered from the AYA and are back at work in your own countries. At the moment, I am concluding the Assembly finances and will soon start working on the report.

From most accounts the AYA was a considerable success. Each one of you contributed very substantially to that success. I would like to write to each one of you individually to express my thanks but there are too many. So I must use this rather impersonal way of expressing sincere gratitude for your hard work and creative, conscientious involvement. I do hope that we may continue to be in touch on our mutual concerns in order to develop further the concerns and recommendations of the AYA.

Finally, I have another request to make. Can each one of you write one or two pages of evaluation on the AYA, its strengths and its limitations or weaknesses? Please do respond and send me your thoughts as soon as possible. Such evaluations will help us to follow-up effectively and also ensure the AYA is properly reported to the CCA constituency.

Thank you again for your support. Let me know of any way CCA YOUTH can support you in your endeavours.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely

CHRIS TREMEWAN
CCA YOUTH

Dear Rimi,
I hope you are back home safely. We are really indebted to you for coming and putting your case so strongly. Now this issue can be taken up in many ways throughout the Asian ecumenical movement. Do keep in touch and I hope we can support you in the future. Warm regards
Chris.

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